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ABSTRACT

The paper presents some informal observations and conclusions drawn from Hawaii's experience with large-scale implementation of new curricula in music, the arts, English language arts, and science over the past ten years. It summarizes each project's different approach to implementation and discusses briefly a number of common conclusions regarding large-scale approaches, their potential and limitations; institutional willingness for high-risk ventures; factors in school reception to change; the myth of teacher resistance to change; a curriculum-change approach to teacher education; and the essential collaboration of those involved in change. Finally it discusses briefly the role of politics in the Hawaiian educational scene and concludes with the observation that political processes should be openly studied if they are to be harnessed to the service of educational improvement. (Author)

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FROM DEVELOPMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION: INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS IN ESTABLISHING CHANGE*

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A man may well bring a horse to the water,
But he cannot make him drinke without he will.

John Heywood, when he put this proverb together in the 1500s, may well have been speaking of the transition from development to implementation--the lines are so apt. Curriculum developers invent; policymakers dispose; but school people--principals, teachers, and students--energize and transform. Unless school people drink of the waters, the more willingly the better, the desired transformations from what is to what might be will never occur.

In this brief paper, I shall speak to some aspects of Hawaii's experience with this most difficult and most critical phase of the entire curriculum development chain--getting our horse to drinke. What can be presented in this brief space is only a distillation of our experience of many involved and complex events covering a decade's span; and like all distillations may have lost some precious essences in evaporation. But the few drops I offer will, I hope, add to our combined pool of knowledge of this crucial stage. The object of our combined knowledge, I think, is how to make the waters so palatable that our horse not only will be brought to water but will happily drinke!

By any standards, Hawaii's achievement in implementing major curricula in elementary English, Japanese, and the arts, in intermediate science, and in music K-12 is an impressive success story. But it has not been an easy achievement. Every project in different degree has had its share of the standard fare for all reformers: conflict and struggle, failure and disappointment, and for some even the threat of extinction. Although support from many quarters has been unflagging, we have been caught in the sludge of bureaucratic inertia and resistance at critical points; we have had to maintain our own continuity or swing helplessly betweentimes in a succession of six superintendents and three acting superintendents in ten years; we have been polite combatants in internecine feuds with colleagues in our own college; we have faced distrustful administrators, indifferent or hostile teachers, and even more hostile parents; and in working with the bureaucracy and at the same time exerting pressure on it for change, we have been in the difficult position of holding with the hare and running with the hound (borrowing more four-footed creatures from John Heywood).

Yet for all the difficulties, the programs we have developed are making a difference for many children in what they learn and how they learn, and for teachers, too, in what they teach and how they teach. Hopefully, also, the new programs are making a difference for children in the pleasure they take in learning, and for teachers in the satisfactions they derive from a renewal of their teaching.

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The implementation stage covers a number of major operations: formal adoption by the decision makers; information dissemination, installation planning and budgeting; procurement and publication; teacher training and continuing field support to teachers; program monitoring, maintenance, and renewal. Presumably summative evaluation is also part of implementation, but this subject and that of publication will be dealt with by other speakers.

The several projects went about these operations in different ways, and each fared differently. Artists in the Schools, the first of our programs, moved smoothly through the approval mechanism and was embraced joyfully by the schools. Not only did it bring dancers, actors, poets, and painters into the schools to weave their magic and relieve teachers for a period; it challenged no vested interest, threatened no teacher, required no training, involved no new materials. Today, five years later, it is still giving delight and, by all indications, will continue to do so indefinitely.

The science project FAST went the grass roots way. It obtained board approval as an alternate program but sought no formal adoption by that body; it did not receive supervision by the Department of Education's curriculum office and instead kept control of implementation. Starting on a modest scale, the developers placed the program only with schools and teachers wanting it. They presented no outsize budget, kept costs within the schools' normal budget; they printed their own materials, trained the teachers, drew in key college of education science staff; they established a close support and communication network through news letters, field visitations, and careful followup, and carried out self-supporting summer science courses to build interest in the program. They wisely let the program and its adopters do the selling, with the result that in less than five years, without fuss and fanfare, FAST is now the major science program in the state's junior high schools.

The Music Program went the commercial route. Like FAST it avoided formal, mandated Board adoption. The developers placed the program with a commercial publishing house, making it competitive with other commercial materials which schools buy out of their normal budgets. At the same time, they began offering inservice training without cost to interested teachers and field support to those schools which had chosen to buy the materials. An active but low-key information dissemination program spread the word, and many schools are now picking it up.

The largest project of them all, the Hawaii English Program (HEP for short), fared very differently. Here was a costly new program calling for radical changes in teacher behaviors; in language arts content; in instructional technologies, including peer teaching; in classroom organization and pupil grouping; in training requirements. It asked teachers to give up the familiar phonics, the reading and language workbooks, and to trust to controversial linguistic approaches, non-text modes, and single copies of trade books. It had a tracking system to check pupil progress which could be a threat as an accountability tool. Worse, the program was not endorsed by the teacher training college; to be candid, there was considerable hostility to it. In short, here was a program with built-in features guaranteed to make it unacceptable to many teachers.

To make matters worse, just about every management decision implementing it was ill advised. The developers' plans for a slower-paced, tighter, voluntary installation were ignored; instead, the program was broadcast statewide into every one of 136 elementary schools. This set the pattern for a highly visible budget request for every legislative session, adding to the hazards the program faced. The installation was mandated by the Board, but no parallel requirement was made for teacher training. No lead time was allowed for procurement of materials, or for streamlining the finished program and ironing out bugs. After one summer of extensive teacher training, further training activities were suspended for two summers while the state passed through a fiscal crisis and its first teacher contract.

HEP is a study in bigness, of too much too soon. By every principle laid out for planned change, it should be defunct by now. And yet it is very much alive, a decade after its initial conception, five years and ten million dollars into implementation, and, for all the problems that have plagued it, indubitably a success.

What of value have we learned from these varied experiences about the dynamics of getting new curricula to children, of getting them used effectively by teachers?

First of all, we are positive that systematic large-scale development and installation holds the best promise for change over all other models of curriculum change. The more radical the change, the more organized and longer should be the change effort. This is true of the local scene as well as the national. Innovations by individual teachers, teacher committees, or schools rarely reach exportable stage. Even those supported over several years by that best subsidized of federal programs, Title I, rarely extend beyond the single classroom. Our experience is clear that even with the problems of bigness, the potential for taking education in desired policy directions is greatest when talents, energies, and money are centralized in fewer but larger efforts covering a longer period of time.

On the other hand, there is a problem of scale that cannot be ignored. To be effective, the project cannot be too small, but neither can it be too big. There are natural geographic/social/political limits beyond which the communication of intent and fidelity of ideas begins to bog down, and implementation efforts do not pay off; a point of diminishing returns is reached. This was demonstrated not only in the local installation of HEP, but also in its attempts to implant authentic models in California and the South Pacific. The cost in staff energies has had the net effect of robbing the Hawaii installation.

Time is also critical: time for shaking down, debugging, getting teachers and parents comfortable, and separating out the effects of the change from those generated by the friction of getting it established. In short, time for a fair test, and perspective to assess long-term benefits and effects of the change on the various outcomes of schooling.

Our experience also shows that there is greater desire and willingness for risk-taking in new educational ventures within schools than the literature seems to indicate. I am speaking here of curriculum changes, not of structural or delivery system changes that alter radically the locus of control in

the schools. The literature on change tends to overrate the institutional constraints against change. The market analogy is often cited to explain why schools are slow to change, disposed only toward innovations perceived as safe or as prestigious by the elite group. Generally this may be true; left to their own resources, schools may tend to react in predictable ways to stress-producing changes. However, there are enough counterforces within the system favorably disposed to curriculum change that, once identified and organized, they can motivate the implementation of fairly radical changes.

Put another way, schools are not passive recipients of change. The dynamics of implementation involves a potent mix of factors which makes the school anything but a passive adopter: the nature of the innovation, its importance as perceived by the teacher, the approach to implementation, the organizational climate, the staff's professionalism, the proportion of young teachers to the "old guard," the quality of key leaders, pupils' reception, parent attitudes, the time available for planning, the degree of staff involvement in the development stage. These factors and many others form a mix which determines how well the implementation proceeds. The project staff needs to work closely with the schools to determine their makeup.

We have noted that the dynamics of implementation differ from those of approval or adoption at the policy level. In FAST, for example, implementation at the teacher level went smoothly, whereas the approval process at top and middle management and board levels met with obstacles. With HEP, the top policy levels (board and legislature) were supportive throughout, while middle management and school-level management were considerably less supportive. Among teachers some 89% expressed preference for it, but a small and extremely vocal minority continues to raise 99% of the opposition. We have had instances of the principal deciding to adopt, while his faculty leaned the other way; and the converse, where the teachers brought a reluctant principal around.

Teachers as a group, we have found, are far more open to change than is commonly believed. Given opportunities for training, particularly if supported by such incentives as free tuition, released time from teaching duties, professional recognition, participation as partners in the process of change, most teachers will opt for change. After all, what human being does not welcome freshness, new perspectives? If the changes are profound, teachers want assurances of safeguards and greater incentives, but teacher resistance to change is largely a myth.

Out of our experiences in the teacher training arena, we have come to view the general preparation of teachers from the particular perspective of curriculum change. The conventional approach prepares prospective teachers as generalists. The assumption is that given general principles and a survey of methods, the teacher will be able to handle anything encountered in the field, including also the adapting of extant materials and the creation of new.

We find otherwise. The teacher trained thoroughly in a well designed specific program developed from theory is more likely to use that as a springboard for change and growth than the teacher given an exposure to many different curricula. We find that teachers trained well in a new curriculum make the best trainers for other teachers. Some of them develop design

competencies and are picked up by the projects. Others move up the ladder. In the schools they often form pockets of ferment around which improvement activities revolve. On advisory councils they make excellent spokesmen for the research and devlopment movement. If we could call the shots, we would organize the major part of all current preservice programs around significant change efforts going on or projected for the public schools.

A central element of the dynamics of implementation is the close collaboration, from start to finish, of every group involved in the change process. The start may well be the needs assessment stage which precedes design, while the finish for any particular program may never be as long as its renewal system functions effectively. Perhaps collaboration is the key element in Hawaii's success. It obtains in the formal institutional agreement which brings the school system and the University together into a cooperative working arrangement. It obtains in the way we work closely with content scholars, with the professional subject organizations, with the teacher union, with curriculum people from state and district levels, and with teachers. In working with such groups, it is not always easy to keep innovation from being reduced to the least common denominator, but the dialogue is healthy and absolutely necessary.

Throughout every stage of implementation, in dealing with individuals and groups, we have engaged in politics as an ever-present fact of life. Whether and how to force a place on the next board agenda; how to recover ground lost in fruitless meetings on professional differences; how to get money to keep afloat; how to bring around a group of loudly unhappy parents; how to "educate" legislators to your view without offending the bureaucracy--these only suggest the kinds of instances in which politics must come into play.

A House majority leader long ago gave me this definition of politics which is as good as any: "Whenever you have a human organization with a job to do, you have to organize power to get the job done. And when you organize power, you have to have politics." Value conflicts are inevitable in effecting change, and power is what resolves them if professional discussion does not. School people don't like to admit to politics, but to avoid it is an impossibility. The pity is that we don't examine the process openly so that we can understand and use it better.

The influence networks which obtain in Hawaii's educational system form a fascinating arena for study. Basically the networks probably do not differ significantly from others, but it seems that the insularity and ethnic makeup of the Islands and the close familial and friendship ties that prevail impart a marked quality of pervasiveness which is unique. Just about everybody knows or is related to somebody who knows or is related to somebody who occupies a position of influence. We know a little about how this influence network operates, but not enough. We know, for example, that a relatively few legislators hold the key to educational decisions in our state legislature but that their support depends on a number of shifting factors in which personality plays a large part. We know that the board is often frustrated on policy issues about which they differ strongly with the legislature and/or the

Governor's office and that the pressure points to apply on those issues lie outside the school body. We know that the decisive power is exercised by a relatively small number of people in an informal power structure outside of the formal decision structure, but that this power varies according to the nature of the decision. We know that the members within this group vary greatly in the degree of influence they wield, and that their influence is not necessarily associated with social or economic status. There is a great deal more to be learned about these centers of influence and how they operate if they are to be harnessed to the service of educational change.

We have taken the position that educational business without politics is impossible, in fact irresponsible. To be political in effecting school improvement is not manipulation but strategy, not opportunist but astute and adroit at seizing the chance, not selfish but single-minded about getting an important job done. This position has paid off.

It has not been my intention to leave the impression that Hawaii has solved all the difficult problems of implementing change on a large scale. Far from it. We have only begun to understand a little the many processes, the intricate networks of relationships that operate in working with the several levels in the system. There are many problems of implementation--social, political, fiscal, and technical--worthy of study and research.